

What's In Your Name?—

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THERE ARE FEW truly Jewish surnames. Names like Bernstein, normally considered as such, were of German, Polish and Russian origin and later adopted by the Jewish people.

Often more than one nationality has contributed to a certain name and credit for origin can be given to several countries. Bernstein is thought to have originated in Russia as well as Germany and is classified as a place name for one who came from Bernstein, which is now in Poland.

It was not until the latter part of the 18th Century that Jews adopted surnames in Europe, which explains why few Jewish names are listed among the early colonists in America. The granting of arms also came somewhat later, when the Jews became knighted by various monarchs. The Austro-Hungarian emperor, Franz Joseph I, granted arms to the Jews on a fairly large scale during the 19th Century.

The Bernstein coat of arms shown depicts a lion rampant of silver and black on a divided shield of red and gold. In Jewish heraldry, the lion is symbolic of deathless courage and was borne as an emblem of the Tribe of Judah.

Records show the grant of a coat of arms to Sigismund Bernstein, a chief army doctor, in Vienna in 1879.

Perhaps the most famous European Bernstein was Aaron Bernstein, the Jewish scientist, author and reformer who was active in synagogue reform in Germany in the 1800s. America's own famous Leonard Bernstein has made the name a familiar one to music lovers.

The name is also recorded as Bernstine.